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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable PETER WELCH, a Senator from the State of Vermont.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, we are transient creatures who long for a sense of permanence. Give us that permanence as we find in You our fixed and abiding center of faith.

Lord, we praise You because You are changeless, without any variableness in Your judgment and mercy. Strengthen our lawmakers for the challenges of our times. Keep them in the shadow of Your wings, and teach them to show mercy. Use Your powerful arm to rescue our Nation from the hands of all enemies of freedom. Let the tranquility of Your dominion increase until the Earth is filled with the knowledge of Your love.

We pray in Your glorious Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mrs. MURRAY).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 14, 2023.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable PETER WELCH, a Senator from the State of Vermont, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WELCH thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Brent Neiman, of Illinois, to be a Deputy Under Secretary of the Treasury.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

RUSSIA

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, earlier today, two Russian military aircraft conducted an unsafe intercept with an unmanned U.S. surveillance drone that was operating within international airspace over the Black Sea.

This intercept was so dangerous and so brazen that the U.S. Air Force was forced to crash their drone into international waters. It is another reckless act by President Putin and his military, and I want to tell Mr. Putin: Stop this behavior before you are the cause of an unintended escalation.

We have seen this behavior from the Russian military before, and it will not deter the United States from conducting operations over the Black Sea. These aggressive actions by Russian aircraft are risky and could lead—I repeat—to unintended escalation.

The United States has routinely flown over the Black Sea since before Putin's illegal and reckless invasion of Ukraine, and I am confident our military will continue to do so.

SILICON VALLEY BANK

Mr. President, now, over the weekend, as we all know, the U.S. banking system faced a significant threat after the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank. If the damage had spread across our financial system, the deposits and savings of tens of millions of families and small businesses could have been at serious risk.

Today, as we speak, thankfully, our banking system is stable thanks to the work of the Biden administration, the Federal Reserve, and the FDIC on Sunday. I thank the President, the Federal Reserve, and the FDIC for taking swift action to preserve confidence in the banking system, and the American people can rest assured that bank regulators have acted quickly and are doing everything they can to protect consumers.

In the days and weeks to come, Congress will look closely at what caused the run on Silicon Valley Bank and how we can prevent similar events in the future.

AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF MILITARY FORCE

Mr. President, now, later today, I will take the first procedural steps to take up legislation repealing the Iraq AUMFs of 1991 and 2002.

• This “buller” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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After a lot of hard work from Senators KAINE and YOUNG, as well as Chairman MENENDEZ and Ranking Member RISCH, this is the week the Senate will begin the process to end the legal authority that started the Iraq war two decades ago.

Every year we keep these AUMFs on the books, and every year we keep them on the books is another chance for future administrations to abuse or misuse them. War powers belong in the hands of Congress, and that means we have a responsibility to prevent future Presidents from exploiting these AUMFs to bumble us into a new Middle East conflict.

Americans are tired of endless wars in the Middle East, and we owe it to them and to our veterans and their families to repeal the Iraq war AUMF.

So thank you—thank you—to the members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for their work, especially Chairman MENENDEZ and Ranking Member RISCH, and thank you again to Senators KAINE and YOUNG for their work spearheading this legislation.

The Iraq war has formally been over for more than 10 years. The reality on the ground has long since changed. So the laws on the books must change too. Repealing this AUMF will in no way hinder our national defense, and it represents a positive step forward in our relationship with the Iraqi Government.

I am pleased this effort has been thoroughly bipartisan. President Biden has voiced his support for the measure. The House passed a similar bill a few years ago with strong support from both Democrats and Republicans. Here in the Senate, the bill was reported out of committee with a 13-to-8 vote. So I thank my colleagues on both sides for allowing this bill to proceed.

AUKUS

Mr. President, now, on AUKUS, yesterday, in San Diego, President Biden joined his counterparts from the United Kingdom and Australia, and he announced the next steps in a historic arrangement known as AUKUS.

The President's announcement is a bold and generational investment to create a new fleet of nuclear-powered submarines to counter President Xi and the Chinese Communist Party's influence in the Pacific. And AUKUS, in general, will be a critical part of ensuring stability in the region. I applaud President Biden for recognizing the need to forge ahead on this multinational partnership.

During my recent codel overseas, our discussions with world leaders stressed the need for the United States to continue deepening our security arrangements with our longstanding partners. At the same time, I made it clear that we also must expand and grow relationships with countries like India, which will play a major role in shaping global security and stability in the 21st century.

And just like AUKUS serves as a bulwark in the Pacific, so will the quad

powers of the United States, Japan, Australia, and India, working together for democracy and stability in Asia.

The United States will only stay ahead of President Xi and the Chinese Communist Party if we can bring other democracies of the world to partner with us—from India, Australia, Japan, the UK, and so many others. And India and Australia can be very important partners in containing President Xi and the CCP.

So I remain committed to deepening our existing relationships and finding opportunities to build new ones, and I look forward to working on a bipartisan basis to advance them.

GUN SAFETY

Mr. President, now, on the President's Executive order on guns, today, in Monterrey Park, CA—where, sadly, unfortunately, tragically, a gunman murdered 11 people in January during Lunar New Year celebrations—President Biden will announce a new Executive order to strengthen background checks and other commonsense gun safety measures.

I commend President Biden for taking this much needed step to fight the scourge of gun violence in our country.

After gunmen massacred dozens of people in Buffalo and Uvalde last year, the Senate defied the NRA and passed a bipartisan, commonsense, and life-saving gun safety bill for the first time in decades. It was the first step Congress took since the Brady bill in 1994, which I was proud to author and lead passage of, which mandated Federal background checks on firearms.

Last year's bipartisan safety bill was a good, long-overdue step of progress, but we must do more. Gun violence remains a devastating sickness that festers deep within the heart of our Nation.

Democrats stand ready to keep working together to combat violence, and we hope a good number of our Republican colleagues will join us once again.

I hope my colleagues on the other side can free themselves from the vice grip of the NRA and the MAGA wing of the Republican Party and work with Democrats to pass more gun safety legislation in this Congress.

INSULIN

Mr. President, now, on insulin and the CBO, it is another important day for millions of Americans who rely on insulin. Following Eli Lilly's recent announcement that they are capping insulin costs at \$35 a month, Novo Nordisk announced today that they are following suit, slashing prices on some insulin products by as much as 75 percent.

It is good news that these enormous drug pharmaceutical companies are waking up to the injustice of price gouging of Americans who rely on insulin daily. There is no justification—none—for having insulin cost \$300 or \$500 or more a month. People who need that insulin for their health, for their safety, for their lives can't afford it

anymore, and this lowering of price is very important.

As we all know, we Senate Democrats took a major step in righting this wrong by capping insulin costs at \$35 a month for Americans on Medicare. It is my hope that both parties can build on this good work with commonsense bipartisan legislation to extend that \$35 cap to all Americans.

Lowering insulin costs is a good policy that everyone on both sides of the aisle should get behind. This is not a Democratic issue. This is not a Republican issue. It is something that affects people in every city, in every State and is an American issue.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE

Mr. President, finally, today, CBO released a letter confirming what most of us already knew: The Republican plan to balance the budget in 10 years and keep the Trump tax cuts is impossible—mathematically impossible—without making cuts to Social Security, Medicare, defense, and veterans' benefits.

To balance the budget in 10 years with no new revenues, while somehow leaving Medicare, Social Security, veterans' programs, and defense unscathed, Republicans would have to cut 86 percent from every other Federal program. That means nearly obliterating funds for Medicaid, for food and housing support, border security, healthcare, infrastructure.

This leaves Americans with a profound worry about their benefits, and it leaves Americans with some big questions down the road. If Republicans can't reach their goals without forcing severe cuts down Americans' throats, then what exactly are they planning to do?

To date, Republicans have refused to talk straight with the American people about budget cuts.

Speaker MCCARTHY, today is March 14. Show us your plan.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

MITCH MCCONNELL

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it seems a little unusual to follow Senator SCHUMER because usually Senator MCCONNELL is next, and we certainly understand why he is not here today. He is in recovery from a fall that he experienced last week. We wish him the very best and hope he is back very soon.

BUDGET

Mr. President, there is an old saying that there aren't a lot of atheists in foxholes.

In my experience, there aren't a lot of unyielding, uncompromising, fiscally conservative, so-called budget hawks when a disaster hits. It gets personal. When tornadoes rip across your State or hurricanes devastate your community, when a cold snap takes down the electric grid in your State, when blazing heat sets off raging wildfires, when a freight train hauling